Livonia

Sunday after Easter -
Vinkovci, Croatia -
V. is in sector E -
Croatian - Serb bombardment - Dayton -
Virulent hatred between
Croatian RC's
Serbian Orthodox
Muslims - Bosnia - some in Croatia

Serb attacks brutally efficient
- public bldgs. symbols of culture
(Vukovar - every public bldg -
hospital - churches
So many churches - there is a
book of bombed churches)

in Vinkovci - Serbs destroyed
RC church -
Angels - retrieved -
dynamited Serbian Orthodox Cathedral

Small Reformed Church in Vinkovci

pastor - Andre Lange - Bishop of
Croatian Ref. Ch
small - but been
there since Reformation -

Building took direct hit - mortar shell penetrated small sanctuary roof - destroyed interior ..

Bish L. + wife - next door - had just - that day - finally listened + came + rejoiced

Now - repaired

- lovely bkfst in tiny kitchen.
- filled to welcome PC(USA) Mod PC(USA) ~~DCUSA~~ - grant - to repair + restore -

Sermon -

Communion - standing - clergy serve

Bread -

Many tears ..

CUBA Issac Jorge

Carlos Emilio Hamm

Hector Hernandez - Persecution.

the revival of faith in Cuba

(ie people have been faithful - now can be open about it)

Hidden Bibles, pastors

+ 100 yr old Reformed Ch -

experiencing tremendous renewal

Cabaiguan -

I ran/stood for Moderator.
out of my love for the church
+ my deep sense that Church Matters.

Church – this frail, sometimes
trivial
occasionally greedy
always human + sinful
institution Matters to God +
to God's plan

+ furthermore
denominations Matter

+ still furthermore congregations
Matter –
perhaps most.
Because we disagree
about what "church" even means
as soon as ~~the~~ we talk about
anything other than congregation

– we agree that it's basic
~~community~~ unit (it's essence is
a community of faithful people
who worship
teach children
represent God in world

What a time to be Christian!

- Pope in Cuba
- Pat Robertson advocating murder in Texas Executive

- Dr Argue, Head of Evangelicals in China

Every one knows, something big is afoot.

1. "Post Denominational Age"
   300 year establishment is coming apart
   Presbys, Epis, Cong, Meth—
   50 yrs ago—all one thing
   the show
   ECB on Cover of TIME
   1960 - for United Somme

   all are changing - declining.

2. Rise of Megachurch

3. Cultural / Ethnic / Religious Pluralism

More Muslims than Presbyterians

We have become ethnically diverse in past 40 yrs — to an unheard-of extent.

Visit to San Diego — B's neighborhood

Churches — =

Islam
Hare Krishna
Buddhist
Jain
Sikhs
Hindu

72,000 different religious Web sites

Furthermore — denominations have lost racial / ethnic / national / linguistic cohesiveness

Epis. — English
Presby — Scots
Reformed — Dutch
Luth — German.

also an economic stratification

today — Who cares?

20% new members are Presby —

4. Perhaps most important dynamic
The Culture War -
along ideological fault-lines

- lib - cons -
- inclusion - exclusion
(diff. World view -)

MEM - all the United's are falling apart -

proliferation of single issue, advocacy groups -

USSR
Yugoslavia
Czechoslovakia
10 yr - old map is useless

Jean Bethke Elshtain
Democracy on Trial
- a Warning

Marty -
The One and the Many
How we hold together

PC(USA) 17 organizations doing basic loyalty

Presbyterian Internal Challenges

We are old –
our glory + our burden

We are urban + deteriorating

We are caught by an issue which will not submit to our venerable deliberative process –

We are divided on issue of homosexuality + church leadership..

x x x

Some are advocating a split.

Let's be cautious about sacrificing unity/integrity of PC(USA)

Church Matters
World Wide Mission
CUBA
Brazil
Croatia
Sudan — growth
Kenya — Hospitals
Korea / N. Korea

Think / what we have meant to this culture

Schools / Colleges / Universities -68
Hospitals
Social Service

Peter Steinfels NYT
Church's vital social services
9 out 10 urban churches
provide space for helping organization - food pantries, clothing, kitchens, shelters, child/elder care, 12 step
AIDS - (growing - big!)

Financial Disaster if not there

Your Church Matters

Celebrate Birth (Baptism)

teach faith values

provide community

stand together in times of sickness, death

- You know what you know it or not -

an impact on your neighborhood - simply by being here -

Elsbeth + Grim Rock

Why existence of church embodies sense of community

How will you live into your future -

3 ways | images

- Family | Faith & Community |
newsmuts, grace, acceptance

- earliest image was a welcoming | hospitable community where all sorts were welcome
- earliest miracle — and scandal — was newsmuts —

we're in danger of forgetting — defining ourselves by who is excluded —

Forget — | exclude no one —

- A school | setting for engagement & personal growth

our oldest Calvinist tradition —

- thoughtful engagement of world

A Sign of God's Commitment

- Be a community of reconciliation + do God's work

Mission is the source of unity -

Industry / Great Days to be the Church

Steam Ambrose Undaunted Courage
Meriwether Lewis - Ap 4, 1805
Knife River intersects Missouri
Keel boat - sent back
" The Happiest Day of My Life"

Called to strike out in a new wilderness called 21st century -
all old support systems are gone -

We must be bold, dream creative + trust that ~~God~~ God is always with us

+ the when we are together

worship

learning - growing

serving -

i.e. Bury Church - what we

do matters - deeply

to the World - to God

to the Future

date: 3/31

Mon - Fri &

Yonito Boyle

Looking for some guidance for engaged couples / and life counseling. Has Yonito suggested you - Tell him your schedule pretty full & said perhaps someone else on staff could help. That was like - How about Calum?

I'd be happy to talk w him - after France -

FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
A LIGHT IN THE CITY

Calum or KSW, or JHB or MRE

MEMORANDUM

date:

to:

from:

re:

Counseling service
engaged couples.
life counseling

Josh*

home 773-743-0538

FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A LIGHT IN THE CITY

May 7 1997

May 7, 1997

The Reverend Thomas P. Eggebeen
St. Paul's Presbyterian Church
27475 Five Mile Road
Livonia, MI 48154

Dear Mr. Eggebeen:

Thank you for your note and the invitation to visit St. Paul's during February 1988. I would very much enjoy being with you and Lydia and Ray Mao since we share grandchildren.

I have decided not to accept Sunday morning preaching engagements away from Fourth Church for a considerable period of time after this moderatorial year is over. We will be sitting down in July to go over the invitation list and will be able to give you a definitive answer then. My sense, however, is that I will not be preaching away from here during that time period.

Is there any possibility that a visit to St. Paul's could happen on some time other than a Sunday morning? The old-fashioned pot-luck dinner, adult forum, and whatever else sound like a good idea to me if we could schedule it sometime other than Sunday morning.

Let me know if this holds any possibility for you. If not, I will certainly understand.

In the meantime, every good wish to you in your important ministry.

Yours faithfully,

John M. Buchanan

JMB:cea

February 25, 1998

The Reverend Thomas P. Eggebeen
St. Paul's Presbyterian Church
27475 Five Mile Road
Livonia, MI 48154

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your kind note. It was good to be with you and to sense again the creative life of St. Paul's.

We'd love to have you give us a phone call the next time you are in Chicago.

Again, many thanks for your hospitality and every good wish to you.

Yours faithfully,

John M. Buchanan

JMB:cea

John M. Buchanan, Pastor

FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A LIGHT IN THE CITY

March 11, 1998

Ms. Sue Perrish
20085 Hubbard
Livonia, MI 48152

Dear Sue,

I'm enclosing copies of receipts covering the Buchanan's visit to St. Paul's Presbyterian Church on February 15th.

Parking at Midway	$ 20.00
Air Fare	160.00
Total	$180.00

If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me at (312) 787-4570.

Sincerely,

Judi Simon

COMERICA BANK
DETROIT, MICHIGAN

10

9-

ST. PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
PH. 313-422-1470 FAX 313-422-3845
27475 FIVE MILE RD.
LIVONIA, MI 48154

PAY TO THE ORDER OF ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY AND 00/100

DATE 3/28/98

AMOUNT *****$180.00

ST. PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JOHN M BUCHANAN
FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHUR
126 EAST CHESTNUT ST
CHICAGO IL 60611

Acc't #: 00120

⑈010440⑈ ⑆072000096⑆ 18500366641⑈

APCQ02009
244

SO

$208.00

ITEM 12
SOUTHWEST AIRLINES RIVER FOREST IL $84.00

Cardmember Account No	Transaction Date	Ticket Number
3782-020325-72006	02/09/98	52611346483975
Passenger Name: BUCHANAN/C		Ticketing Airline: SOUTHWEST AIRLINES
Issuer Name: ACORN TRAVEL INC		Issuer Address: RIVER FOREST

From / To	Carrier	Class	Transaction Amount
From MIDWAY ARPT IL To DETROIT MI-WAYNE C To MIDWAY ARPT IL To To	WN	M7	$84.00

Amexco Use Only
90419020360
037005
01 041003

PASSENGER TICKET
S/E # 7992400747

80298 2

PARKING MIDWAY

MIDWAY AIRPORT
PARKING
MAIN LOT
OU 02/16/98 10:16
IN 02/15/98 14:05
FEE 2 $20.0(
TOTAL-> $20.0(
CASH TEND $20.0(
CASH PAID $20.0(
80298 THANK 2 YOU K1

20.00

ACORN TRAVEL INC

7777 W. LAKE STREET
RIVER FOREST, ILLINOIS 60305
PHONE: (708) 771-5500
FAX: (708) 771-4834

ASTA
American Society of Travel Agents

SALES PERSON: DM ITINERARY/INVOICE NO. Ø127789 DATE: 23 JAN 98
RCPHIV PAGE: Ø1

TERMS: PAYMENT DUE UPON RECEIPT
Please see reverse side for important information.
NOTE: Due to the necessity of issuing tickets in advance to protect fares, we advise that you verify flight times and schedules — 24 hours prior for domestic travel — 72 hours prior for international travel.
Thank You For Your Business

TO: JOHN BUCHANAN
FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
126 E. CHESTNUT
CHICAGO, ILL 6Ø611

FOR: BUCHANAN/JOHN

INVOICE

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15 FEB 98 - SUNDAY
AIR SOUTHWEST AIRLINES FLT:527 ECONOMY
LV CHICAGO MIDWAY 32ØP EQP: 737 STRETCH
AR DETROIT METRO 515P NON-STOP
ARRIVE: MAIN TERMINAL

16 FEB 98 - MONDAY
AIR SOUTHWEST AIRLINES FLT:93Ø ECONOMY
LV DETROIT METRO 1ØØ5A EQP: BOEING 737 3ØØ
DEPART: MAIN TERMINAL
AR CHICAGO MIDWAY 1ØØ5A NON-STOP

AIR TICKET WN1129688Ø14 BUCHANAN JOHN
BILLED TO AX378202Ø32572ØØ6 84.ØØ*

SUB TOTAL 84.ØØ
NET CC BILLING 84.ØØ*

TOTAL AMOUNT DUE Ø.ØØ

*AN C235
THANK YOU WE APPRECIATE YOUR BUSINESS**DONNA
THIS TICKET IS NONREFUNDABLE
THIS TICKET CARRIES A CANCELLATION/REVISION FEE
PHOTO IDENTIFICATION NEEDED FOR TRAVEL
SOUTHWEST AIRLINES DOES NOT PREASSIGN SEATS
EARLY CHECKIN IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

St. Paul's

John M. Buchanan, Pastor

FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A LIGHT IN THE CITY

February 24, 1998

e-mail to: Mr. Ralph C. Bolz

Rcbolz@aol.com

Dear Mr. Bolz:

Thank you for your message and your kind words about my speech in Livonia last week. It was good to be with your congregation and, of course, I always enjoy seeing Lydia Mayo with whom I share grandparenting honors.

Ralph, I appreciate your thoughts about the democratization of the Presbyterian Church. We are, as you know, constituted on the republican constitutional model – elected officers making major decisions for the body politic.

I agree that the system works better when all the citizens are involved in the decision-making process. Our hope, from the beginning, has been that the entire Presbyterian family would engage in the conversation about ordination of gay and lesbian persons. You are quite right in your assessment that this has not happened. In some places, where the decision was taken very seriously, there have been more than enough resources including seminars and papers "for" and "against." However, I am always distressed to learn that it is only a small fraction of the Presbyterian family that is engaged in the conversation thus far.

I have no authority anymore since I am a former moderator but I will personally take very seriously your suggestion that the entire Presbyterian family should be heard on this issue.

Thank you for your thoughtful note and every good wish to you.

Yours faithfully,
John M. Buchanan

The Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago 126 East Chestnut Street Chicago IL 60611.2094 phone 312.787.4570 fax 312.787.4584

Allerton Carol

From: System Administrator
To: Carson Simeon
Sent: Tuesday, February 24, 1998 3:14 PM
Subject: Delivered:

Your message

To: Carson Simeon
Subject:
Sent: 2/24/98 3:14 PM

was delivered to the following recipient(s):

Carson Simeon on 2/24/98 3:14 PM

Simon Judi

From: Carson Simeon
Sent: Monday, February 16, 1998 11:25 AM
To: Simon Judi

Judi — How do I answer this?

Subject: To Rev. John M. Buchanan, a comment from Livonia, Mi.
Date: Mon, 16 Feb 1998 11:25:54 EST
From: Rcbolz@aol.com
To: Fourthch@mcs.com

Dear Rev. John Buchanan, a comment from Livonia, Mi.
2-16-98

I am a member of St. Paul's Church and was in attendance at the dinner, your presentation and the discussion yesterday in Livonia. I am just a lowly member of the congregation, have never been in a leadership position, yet was thinking of your comments as I lay in bed early this morning, and just wanted to convey one not so simple thought to you. My wife and I did enjoy your talk and your insight into some of the problems of the church. I also brought a friend of mine, who is in a leadership position in a Detroit church, and she said that you gave her a lot to think about.

One of my themes lately, that I have conveyed to Rev. Eggebeen, is my opinion that churches would be better off if they empowered the lowly congregational members to a greater degree. As I'm sure you know, many major industries in the U.S. have had to do this during the last 10 to 20 years, as a matter of efficiency and survival against foreign competition. The lowly worker has had to be empowered to use his brains, ideas and initiative to get the job done. The message from churches in general, it seems to me, is a top down message with little mechanism in place for feedback from the lowly member. The major feedback loop seems to be the amount of money each member pledges, and I agree that is major, but it's awful silent. I can remember a few years back at a congregational meeting, the financial officer saying, "great, if you want to do more good, just give us more money, and that will take care of it". But why doesn't the church promote and be more open to other feedback means. I guess I would like to see some major decisions made by the membership by actual vote. The leadership could present the pros and cons after studying the issue, also present options, and then let the congregation decide. Wouldn't that be a good feedback loop to let the congregation feel that they really are the church.

Now, with the above theme in mind, Rev. Buchanan, why couldn't this be applied to the Gay & Lesbian issue. Since most of us in the mid-west don't know "beans" about gays or lesbians, we would need education, prior to a vote. The church leadership could provide some of this with a "for" position paper, and an "against" position paper, and perhaps some other background info. Instead of a small group at the top making the decision, why not have a referendum of all Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) members. Since we are probably better off without too many rules, I think at least a 55% margin would be

required for any proposal on the subject to pass. Wouldn't this method for making the decision take the "pressure" off of the church leadership. Once the national church sets up the mechanism for such a vote, it could be used for other "impossible" to decide issues. I know it's scary, but you did say that good creative idea's are necessary to start rebuilding the church. Perhaps a more democratic approach to some issues should be considered.

Well, Sir, that's my thoughts for this morning, and I greatly thank you for giving me the opportunity to think about the subject.

In God we trust,

Ralph C. Bolz

14130 Livonia Crescent, Livonia, MI 48154
Mail: Rcbolz@aol.com

E

St. Pauls

John M. Buchanan, Pastor

FOURTH
PRESBY
TERIAN
CHURCH

A LIGHT IN THE CITY

February 25, 1998

The Reverend Thomas P. Eggebeen
St. Paul's Presbyterian Church
27475 Five Mile Road
Livonia, MI 48154

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your kind note. It was good to be with you and to sense again the creative life of St. Paul's.

We'd love to have you give us a phone call the next time you are in Chicago.

Again, many thanks for your hospitality and every good wish to you.

Yours faithfully,

John M. Buchanan

JMB:cea

The Reverend Thomas P. Eggebeen, D.Min.
St. Paul's Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
27475 FIVE MILE RD. • LIVONIA, MI 48154
PHONE (313) 422-1470 • FAX: (313) 422-3845 • E-MAIL: tegg19@idt.net

Monday, February 16, 1998

The Rev. John M. Buchanan
The Fourth Presbyterian Church
126 East Chestnut Street
Chicago, IL 60611-2094

Dear John:

My heartiest thanks for taking the time to visit with us. Your comments were so delightfully phrased, incisively put. It was a pleasure to have you and Sue at St. Paul's. I'm sure Lydia was especially pleased, and how nice to have John and Nancy here, too.

After reading a piece from the Presbyterian Coalition this morning, I'm just heartsick. Their position is so narrow and so determined, there is no room at all for discussion. One's own position always makes eminent sense, I suppose, while the other side seems foolish and ill-thought at best, but that's just the way it seems to me.

Blessings on you, your family, and your church. In the next several months, Donna and I hope to be in Chicago to see our son and his fiancée and it would be our pleasure to see you and Sue; perhaps we might have dinner together sometime.

Keep up the good work; be not discouraged! An inclusive church is still the only kind of church worthy of the name Christian and Presbyterian.

Cordially,

Thomas P. Eggebeen

CC: Sue Perrish & Sue Gloster

John M. Buchanan, Pastor

FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A LIGHT IN THE CITY

July 23, 1997

The Reverend Thomas P. Eggebeen
St. Paul's Presbyterian Church
27475 Five Mile Road
Livonia, MI 48154

Dear Tom,

I am following through on your very kind invitation to come to St. Paul's during February of 1998.

As I indicated in my last correspondence with you, it will not be possible for me to be away from Fourth Church on a Sunday morning in February. And, of course, the sadness about Ray Mayo's illness is another factor in our thinking.

Could we have a conversation about this some time soon? Would it make any sense for me to come over to Livonia – perhaps on a Sunday evening, assuming I can get to Detroit after church here on Sunday morning, to be with you for some kind of an evening event?

In any event, let's correspond a little bit more and see if we can come up with something which is acceptable to everybody. In the meantime, please know my gratitude for your invitation and for your very important ministry with Ray and Lydia at this critical time.

Yours faithfully,

John M. Buchanan

JMB:cea

Jul 98

208TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JOHN M. BUCHANAN, Moderator

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

May 7, 1997

The Reverend Thomas P. Eggebeen
St. Paul's Presbyterian Church
27475 Five Mile Road
Livonia, MI 48154

Dear Mr. Eggebeen:

Thank you for your note and the invitation to visit St. Paul's during February 1988. I would very much enjoy being with you and Lydia and Ray Mao since we share grandchildren.

I have decided not to accept Sunday morning preaching engagements away from Fourth Church for a considerable period of time after this moderatorial year is over. We will be sitting down in July to go over the invitation list and will be able to give you a definitive answer then. My sense, however, is that I will not be preaching away from here during that time period.

Is there any possibility that a visit to St. Paul's could happen on some time other than a Sunday morning? The old-fashioned pot-luck dinner, adult forum, and whatever else sound like a good idea to me if we could schedule it sometime other than Sunday morning.

Let me know if this holds any possibility for you. If not, I will certainly understand.

In the meantime, every good wish to you in your important ministry.

Yours faithfully,

John Buchanan

John M. Buchanan

JMB:cea

100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40202-1396
502-569-5360
502-569-8008 FAX

Fourth Presbyterian Church
126 E. Chestnut Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
312-787-4570
312-787-4588 FAX

Feb 98

The Reverend Thomas P. Eggebeen, D.Min.

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

27475 FIVE MILE RD. • LIVONIA, MI 48154

PHONE (313) 422-1470 • FAX: (313) 422-3845 • E-MAIL: tegg19@idt.net

1998

Invite

file

Friday, April 25, 1997

The Rev. Dr. John Buchanan
Fourth Presbyterian Church
126 E. Chestnut
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Dear John:

Lydia Mayo prompted me last week to get a letter off to you for a visit to St. Paul's: of the month of February, 1988, please choose any one of the Sundays and let me know ... for two services, an adult forum in between, and maybe even a good old fashioned pot luck dinner Saturday night.

Lydia says: "He can always stay with us" ... but if you wish, we'd be happy to put you up in an area motel, too ... just let me know your pleasure.

It's been a busy year for you, and I wish you good health and a speedy recovery from the demands of being Moderator. I have appreciated your efforts in spite of a most difficult era for the Church.

Looking forward to your being in our pulpit.

Cordially,

Tom

Thomas P. Eggebeen

CC: Sanctuary Commission

relationships, your vocation, your aging, your death; to bring whatever you have into his presence—your belief, and most importantly, your doubts, your unbelief.

The promise is that God is trustworthy—God is faithful. Whatever becomes of us, God can be counted on to love us, forgive us, accept us, and welcome us home.

Wendell Berry, in one of his *Sabbath* poems, writes:

> "The mind that comes to rest is tended
> In ways that it cannot intend.
> Is borne, preserved, and comprehended
> By what it cannot comprehend."
> (*Sabbaths*, p. 7-8)

"I believe; help my unbelief."

"Just as I am, though tossed about,
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

Amen.

It is, in fact, a bad definition of faith with which we are operating here; a disastrous definition, a definition characterized by that crusty old Maine farmer, who said, "Faith means believing what you know ain't so."

As a matter of fact, I would propose that doubt is part of an honest faith; that faith without doubt is either dishonest or dead. I take for my model the compelling man who confesses, "I believe; help my unbelief."

Doubt, after all, is a mostly useful dynamic. Rollo May wrote, "The most creative people neither ignore doubt nor are paralyzed by it, and act despite it. Commitment is healthiest when it is not without doubt, but in spite of doubt." I love something the poet Rilke said once, "Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and learn to love the questions themselves." (see William Sloane Coffin, *Courage and Love*, p. 7).

Scientifically, doubt and skepticism are part of the process of new discovery. The history of medicine is the story of men and women strong enough to doubt conventional wisdom, often times in the face of fierce opposition from religious authorities. Transfusions, antibiotics, vaccinations, surgery—all of it grew out of the courage of a few individuals to challenge conventional wisdom, *i.e.*, what the world was absolutely sure it knew. Madeline T. Engle reminds us that, "every time an unexpected discovery is made in the world of knowledge, it shakes the religious establishment of the day."

Something happens to religion that has no room for doubt; something not very pleasant, nor, in my opinion, faithful. It becomes exclusive. It begins to focus on keeping out those who don't measure up. It invests its energy building walls, not bridges. It becomes timid, introverted, and irrelevant. The philosopher Pascal quipped, "I am astonished at the boldness with which men undertake to speak of God." And Presbyterian theologian William Placher reminds us that an important part of our Reformed theological tradition is that God, even in revelation, remains hidden, mysterious; that, as St. Augustine noted, centuries ago, "If you understand, it is not God." Martin Luther named it the "hiddeness of God," and taught that faith is the acceptance of insecurity, living in trust of a God who remains a mystery. Placher guesses that Luther would call the doubters the most authentic believers." (*The Domestication of Transcendence*, p. 51).

What the man who brought his son to Jesus had was not intellectual certainty. He did not have his personal theological statement in hand. He brushed right by the theological questions that stop us in our tracks and cause us to build walls of orthodoxy around our religious institutions. He did not declare his belief in the Trinity or the blood atonement of Jesus or the doctrine of divine election. He didn't fall on his knees and recite a creed, rather, he did recite his most personal, most honest creed. He brought to Jesus what he had: his belief and his unbelief and a heart full of love for his son, and it was enough.

"Faith," Douglas John Hall says, "is a category of relationship and a fundamental trust. Faith is what occurs from the human side, when we know ourselves to be encountered, judged, and accepted by the gracious God."

That's exactly what happened to that man when he came to Jesus—a personal confrontation that evoked his trust. Something like that is necessary for the recovery of the churches in our time. As mainline Christianity continues to lose members, the temptation is to tighten

believed that the person was possessed by a demon. Apart from understanding and treatment, epilepsy is a heartbreaking condition. Most of the time, he is fine; a beautiful, energetic little boy, running and playing and talking and asking questions non-stop. And then, without warning, his beautiful face contorts, his eyes roll back, he falls down, and he can't seem to speak or hear. He grinds his teeth almost violently and foams at the mouth. People are terrified and his friends run away; then, later, children, being children, tease him about it and mimic his seizures. It is humiliating. It's also dangerous; he has often hurt himself during one of his seizures. His parents have done everything they can think of, talked to everyone who knew anything or thought they did, tried every prescription. And, as parents in any age who have responsibility for a chronically-ill child, they look to the future with a great deal of wariness and dread. Someday, he'll be on his own, without them to protect him and take care of him. So, they wait and watch for anyone who has a new idea, a new approach.

That's what the man was doing there that day. It doesn't say so, but I think he's feeling very vulnerable and not a little foolish. He doesn't like to beg anyone for help, and he's not at all comfortable with religious fanatics and faith healers and would-be messiahs. In fact, his inherent intelligence and careful thoughtfulness are often in conflict with his desperation to help his son live. He doesn't like this business of coming to a young, charismatic rabbi from Nazareth.

> "Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so."

And at that very moment, it happened again. The little boy had a seizure and fell down. And his father is surely cradling him when he says, "If you are able to do anything, have pity and help us."

Jesus responds, "Anything is possible for the one who believes." And now, the man begins to weep; he and his faith and his love and his desperate hope for his son are now the focus. "All things are possible if you believe," Jesus has said.

So there he is, loving his little son enough to walk through the fires of hell for him, enough to die for him, and it turns out that his son's life depends not on his bravery, but on his faith. And so, for the love of his son, he blurts out the most honest confession I've ever heard: "I believe; help my unbelief."

That touches my heart. I'm a father. It touches that place in each of us where we love desperately, love enough to give life itself for the child, the woman, the man; but also the place where we know the limits of our love; where we know that sometimes we can't give life-healing wholeness, save life; can't make it all right. "I believe; help my unbelief."

Theologian Douglas John Hall writes, "No Biblical verse is more existentially meaningful . . . than this prayer, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." (*Thinking the Faith*, p. 250).

We post-moderns, as a matter of fact, seem to be suspended somewhere between belief and unbelief, faith and doubt. Part of us continues to want a religion that is rational and